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OCI No. 8469
Copy No. 3

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
4 NOVEMBER 1953

SOVIET UNION AVOIDING TALKS ON GERMANY

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The Soviet note of 3 November makes clear the USSR's intention to use the demand for China's inclusion in a conference on international tensions as an excuse for preventing four-power talks on Germany. It is the latest in a series of four notes delivered in 1953 which have revealed both an increasingly intransigent attitude on the German issue and an unwillingness to discuss Germany alone.

The note of 3 November goes beyond its predecessors, stating flatly that ratification of the EDC agreement would make impossible the restoration of Germany as a unified state and thereby render pointless any consideration of the German question at a four-power foreign ministers' meeting.

The 4 August note, first of the 1953 series, proposed that at a foreign ministers' meeting the German question take second place on the agenda, following a discussion of measures to ease international tension. It made clear that this subject included the reduction of armaments, prohibition of foreign military bases, and examination of the question of participation in international discussions, apparently a reference to Communist China. Although the note did not specifically demand that Peiping participate in the German part of the agenda, allusions to China's rights in international affairs indicated that country should be included. The 15 August note was limited to the German question, without reference to broader issues.

The next note on 28 September seemed to call for two conferences, one of five powers including Communist China on easing international tensions, and the other a four-power meeting on Germany. An article in Moscow's authoritative New Times elaborated on that note and suggested as suitable topics for a five-power conference, the Korean problem, the seating of Communist China in the UN, armament reductions, foreign bases, and the question of war propaganda. The note was vague on the relationship between these two conferences, but appeared to suggest they were interdependent.

Document No.	022
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Class. Changed To:	TS S C
Date:	17 JUL 1978
By:	

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The note of 3 November repeats the 28 September proposal in language which makes plain the Kremlin's desire for a single conference with Communist China's participation in all agenda items except those involving the German question. It insists that a German settlement cannot be discussed except in connection with other problems of international tension, particularly the question of military bases.

The Soviet position on Germany has remained unchanged since the note exchanges of last year. With regard to peace treaty terms, the Soviet Union attached to its note of 15 August 1953 the identical draft treaty submitted in March 1952, which includes two proposals strongly opposed by the West. One is permanent recognition by the West of the Oder-Neisse frontier. The other is the prohibition of any coalition or military alliance directed against any power which fought Germany in World War II, a formula interpreted by the USSR to preclude German participation in EDC. There is no evidence that these two positions have been modified in any way.

Similarly, the USSR has been rigid on the agenda terms under which it was willing to discuss the German question. While in 1952 it supported in principle the Western demand for free elections, it disagreed with the Western position that they should be the first order of business. In answer to the Western suggestion that a UN commission study election conditions, it proposed a four-power commission but subordinated it also to treaty talks on the agenda.

In the 1953 notes the Soviet attack on the commission plan as a Western delaying device led the Western powers to drop it. The notes of 15 August and 28 September developed a plan for elections which was unacceptable to the West because they would be held by a provisional all-German government without international supervision, after the treaty talks.

According to the Soviet plan, a foreign ministers' meeting called to discuss a peace treaty would approve the formation of a provisional government of East and West Germans. The Germans themselves would determine whether conditions were appropriate for a free election, and then plan for its supervision. This proposal raised serious doubts that such elections would be free or would permit the new government to be represented at the peace conference which the Soviet note proposed be held within six months. The latest note left this situation unchanged.

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The Kremlin's evasive attitude on four-power talks probably springs from recognition of the weakness of its propaganda position caused by its refusal to compromise on the present frontiers of the Orbit. At the same time, continued unrest in East Germany may have reinforced the USSR's unwillingness to offer any sort of election proposal in answer to Western demands.

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